

Couldn't Reach Superiors When Seen, Bucher Says

CORONADO, Calif. (AP) — The skipper of the USS Pueblo said today he had extreme difficulty communicating with his superiors to tell them about the first time his intelligence ship was detected by North Korean ships, the day before it was seized.

Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher said more than 20 vessels came within sighting distance in the hours before the Pueblo was captured—one circling within 30 yards and another firing a "large orange flare that burned about 30 seconds."

BUCHER TESTIFIED for a second day before a board of inquiry. Yesterday, Bucher said the Navy didn't provide retaliatory help or adequate guns, communications or explosives to destroy secret equipment when the Pueblo was taken.

"As we had feared we would," Bucher said today, "We were unable to effect immediate communications" with the commander of naval forces in Japan.

"It took us 12 to 14 hours to establish communications to

file our first situation report," Bucher said, "and we tried continuously during that time."

Bucher said he wanted to report sighting a North Korean submarine chaser, which he didn't think had detected him; two North Korean government fishing boats, which "circled the Pueblo at 30 yards while I was flying the international signal for an oceanography test" and 18 contacts with other vessels."

said he was totally unprepared for the North Korean attack, although he added that two interpreters were aboard the Pueblo to monitor North Korean tactical circuits.

Bucher's testimony was heard by the court's five admirals, investigating the loss of the Pueblo last Jan. 23, the death of one crewman and imprisonment of the 82 others for 11 months.

WHEN he sailed the Pueblo on its mission to scout North Korean radar and North Korean

and Soviet ships in the Sea of Japan, Bucher testified, he wanted twin 20- or 40-millimeter guns.

But instead, Bucher said, he got two .50-caliber machine guns, 3,000 to 5,000 rounds of ammunition, a spare barrel and a mount for a third .50-caliber machine-gun he never received.

The weapons were much smaller and lighter than those he said he had requested.

THEY were installed in Japan, Bucher said, a few weeks before the Pueblo was to begin her intelligence mission off North Korea.

Bucher said he was under orders to "employ (the guns) as a last resort only in cases where threat to survival is obvious . . . and not to practice the use of those guns or uncover them in the presence of foreign ships."

Bucher said this was to keep the intelligence ship from appearing aggressive.

HE SAID the guns were "temperamental, difficult to keep ad-

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EARLIER TODAY, Bucher

MARKET SUMMARY

STOCKS EDGED to the downside in late dealings today after spending most of the day in an irregular rut as Wall Street awaited some indications of how the new administration is going to move. Caution also was inspired by a record decline in Big Board short interest and cuts in prices of sulphur and zinc.

GRAIN futures in Chicago were mostly a trifle higher and soybeans gained slightly. Butcher hogs were strong to 25 cents higher, top \$21.85 per hundredweight. Steers were steady, top \$31.

NEW YORK cocoa futures advanced 19 to 20 points. Copper closed 45 to 75 points higher while silver declined 80 points. World sugar futures fell 7 to 10 points.

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justed and hard to prepare for firing."

Bucher said he picked what he thought were the best places to mount the weapons—one fore and one aft—but they still left portions of the side of the vessel uncovered.

Clasping and unclasping his hands at the witness table Bucher said he also asked for explosives to destroy secret equipment and codes in the event of capture.

THE REQUEST was "deferred," Bucher said, because his commander told him "in order for the destruct system to be effective . . . it must be integral to secret equipment."

"Since the equipment had already been installed they said it was not possible to put in the explosives without a great deal of expense and time."

"I had as destruct equipment fire axes and sledge hammers capable of being swung by a standard size sailor to bash in the equipment." He said it would have taken 2½ hours to scuttle the ship.

COMMUNICATIONS aboard ship were inadequate, he said, because the Pueblo was not equipped with a Navy telephone system—only an old Army system insufficient during emergencies.

Before he left on his mission, Bucher said, an operations officer at the headquarters of Pacific Fleet told him it was doubtful that help would be available in time to save the Pueblo in the event of a seizure.